

Communications Grants Project Idea Form Guidance

As you apply for communications interoperability-related State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) funding, please read this document carefully. It contains valuable information about how to complete your project idea form.

Submission & Review Process

The first step in applying for SHSGP funding is to ensure that your project idea has been vetted by your Regional Preparedness Advisory Committee for Interoperability (RPAC-I). In addition to submitting your proposal, your RPAC-I Chair must confirm regional support of your proposal by e-mailing the Office of Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security (OVAHS) Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), Chris McIntosh at chris.mcintosh@governor.virginia.gov.

Once your locality's project idea form has been recommended as a regional priority by your RPAC-I, submit the form to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) (*contact information is provided on page 4*). Once the submission deadline has closed, VDEM will forward all communications-related proposals to the SIEC Grants Working Group (GWG), which will review the project proposals and make funding recommendations to the SIEC. The SIEC considers the GWG's recommendations and incorporates them into their recommendations to the Senior Leadership Committee¹ where the final funding decisions are made and submitted to the Governor for consideration. The Governor makes the final funding decisions.

Proposals submitted by state agencies will also be reviewed by the GWG. The GWG will provide the Senior Leadership Committee with recommendations, separate from the proposals submitted by RPAC-I members.

Helpful Hints

Be thorough and detailed in completing your proposal. Without detail, the GWG cannot effectively evaluate your project. The items below are to help you track your progress in completing this proposal. As you prepare to submit your form, be able to explain in detail how the project:

- Improves interoperability
- Enhances emergency response capabilities
- Crosses multiple jurisdictions and disciplines
- Is operationally and technically feasible, and cost effective
- Aligns with the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and the State Homeland Security Strategy's Goals and Objectives
- Increases regional collaboration
- Adheres to national communications standards
- Addresses mutual aid
- Defines a clear and effective management strategy
- Addresses sustainability

¹ The Leadership Committee includes individuals from both the Secretary's Office for Veteran's Affairs & Homeland Security and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

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- Has a clearly defined budget with supporting documentation to explain projected costs
- Project idea forms that provide supporting documentation along with their responses may result in a higher score.
- If you are struggling to provide the requested level of detail in your proposal, consider requesting a grant for a feasibility study to gather additional details that will ensure a successful project.
- Be sure to provide a well written Executive Summary. This summary is critical to the SIEC's review of your project and the GWG's funding recommendations.
- If you are awarded a grant for equipment, please remember that the National Interoperability channels MUST be programmed into any radio(s) purchased with SHSGP funds. Information on standard channel nomenclature can be found here:
<http://apcointl.org/911-resources/standards/apco-standards-for-download.html>
- If your project idea improves operability in your jurisdiction, please ensure that the solution you seek also helps your jurisdiction to become interoperable. Plan your project and purchases with a regional mindset.
- Ensure that your entity is eligible to receive grant funding. While towns are eligible to participate in interoperability projects, only state agencies, cities and counties are eligible to apply. Please visit http://www.vahs.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Interoperability/docs/rpaci_map.pdf to review the list of eligible cities and counties.
- Project applicants should be prepared for inquiries about their locality's ability to scale back the proposed project. The input provided will not be scored, but should be thorough.
- Please limit the use of acronyms in the proposal, or ensure that each acronym is spelled out upon first reference.
- Each response on the proposal will receive a score of 0-5. The scores are defined below:
 - **0** = Applicant does NOT address any criteria, component, or provide requested information or documentation
 - **1** = Applicant addresses EITHER the criteria, component or the information or documentation requested, but not ALL of the requested information
 - **2** = Applicant addresses SOME of the criteria and components and provides SOME of the information or documentation requested
 - **3** = Applicant addresses MOST of the criteria and components and provides MOST of the requested information or documentation, but does not fully provide both
 - **4** = Applicant addresses MOST of the criteria and components and provides ALL of the requested information or documentation requested (or in reverse), but does not fully provide both
 - **5** = Applicant addresses ALL of the criteria and components and provides ALL requested information or documentation

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Key Terms

There are several terms in the project idea form that may require further explanation.

Authorized Equipment List (AEL): A list of equipment that is eligible for purchase under the SHSGP. All equipment you request will require an AEL number. To view eligible equipment visit <https://www.rkb.us/mel.cfm?subtypeid=549>.

Independent City: Those cities within the Commonwealth that have been so designated by the legislative process. Independent cities are identified in the RPAC-I One Pager on the *Interoperability in Virginia* Web site: http://www.vahs.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Interoperability/docs/rpaci_map.pdf.

Interoperability: The ability for key public safety personnel to talk with one another via communication systems – to exchange voice and/or data with one another on demand and in real time, whenever necessary.

Operability: The ability of emergency responders to establish and sustain communications in support of mission operations.

Primary jurisdictions: A jurisdiction that receives equipment and/or services as part of the grant.

Regional: Two or more counties (localities) or independent cities (as defined by legislative process) or combinations of the two.

Regional Priorities: Those priorities that have been established by the RPAC-Is in a given region to overcome the lack of interoperability, or to enhance interoperability within the region.

Secondary jurisdiction: Any other locality or entity benefiting indirectly from the primary jurisdiction's grant request; these jurisdictions do not receive any equipment or services from the grant.

Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP): Locally-driven, multi-jurisdictional, and multidisciplinary statewide plan to enhance emergency communications interoperability. Every state has an approved SCIP that addresses designated critical elements for statewide interoperability and a self-identified process to frequently update the SCIP as progress is made and new initiatives emerge.

State Homeland Security Strategy's Goals and Objectives: The strategy is available via a secure Web site. The document can be accessed by visiting www.vaemergency.com and clicking on "Restricted Access Area Utilities" on the right hand tool bar and requesting an account. Once your account is active you should be able to view the goals and objectives document.

Helpful Links

- **SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum**
http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/Interoperability_Continuum_Brochure_2.pdf
- **2012 SCIP**
<http://www.vahs.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Interoperability/docs/2012StratPlan.pdf>
- **Authorized Equipment List (AEL)**
<https://www.rkb.us/mel.cfm?subtypeid=549>
Once on the AEL homepage, click on the link that allows you to customize the AEL by grant and select State Homeland Security Program (SHSP). The equipment listed there is eligible for SHSP funding.
- **Department of Homeland Security Grant Guidance**

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Visit the FEMA Grants Web site for guidance on various grants. Visit <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/hsgp/#3>

- **Eligibility** All eligible cities and counties are listed on the RPAC-I One-Pager, which can be found here: http://www.vahs.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Interoperability/docs/rpaci_map.pdf
- **Standard Channel Nomenclature and Interoperability Frequencies**
<http://apcointl.org/911-resources/standards/apco-standards-for-download.html>

Grant Management Requirements

- Applicant understands that no project can be started (federal and/or matching funds) having the potential to impact Environmental or Historical Preservation (EHP) resources without the prior approval of FEMA, including but not limited to communications towers, physical security enhancements, new construction, and modifications to buildings, structures and objects that are 50 years old or greater. Applicant must comply with all conditions placed on the project as the result of the EHP review. Any change to the approved project scope of work will require re-evaluation for compliance with these EHP requirements. Any activities that have been initiated without the necessary EHP review and approval will result in a non-compliance finding and will **not** be eligible for FEMA funding.
- In accordance with HSPD-5, the adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a requirement to receive Federal preparedness assistance through grants, contracts, and other activities. By submitting this project proposal you and all participating entities are certifying that your locality/state agency is NIMS compliant.
- Submission of this project proposal does not guarantee funding.

Any projects awarded funds will be required to complete a grant application, check all purchases against the Allowable Equipment Lists (www.rkb.us), and follow the administrative guidelines as found on <http://vaemergency.com/em/grants>

Regional Priorities

Please ensure that your project idea aligns with your region's priorities. Check with your RPAC-I Chair for additional details.

Submission Instructions

VDEM Grants Management Office
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804-897-6613 FAX